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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000143

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR ABRAMS/RAMCHAND/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/14/2019

TAGS: KWBG PHUM ASEC IS PBTS PTER

SUBJECT: NEW LAND CONFISCATIONS IN EAST JERUSALEM AND WEST BANK

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. The Jerusalem Municipality informed an East Jerusalem family that ten dunams (2.5 acres) of their land will be confiscated to build a school for Palestinian children. A Municipality representative told PolOff the Municipality planned to confiscate land throughout East Jerusalem to meet the need for classrooms for Palestinian students. Separately, the IDF issued an order January 12 to confiscate 506 dunams (126.5 acres) of public land within the Abu Dis Municipality to allow security barrier construction around Ma'ale Adumim. Peace Now said this will bring the settlement of Qedar into the Ma'ale Adumim bloc, preventing Palestinians from reaching several dunums of land between them. The IDF also issued an order January 13 to confiscate 18 dunams (4.5 acres) of land to construct a road connecting Gevaot and Betar Illit settlements. End summary.

Al-Tur: "The Municipality Must Find Another Place"

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¶2. (C) Jerusalem lawyer Hussayn Ghnaim told PolOff January 13 that the Jerusalem Municipality informed his clients, the al-Hadra family, on January 8 that ten dunams of their land in the al-Tur area of East Jerusalem will be confiscated to build an elementary school for Palestinians. Ghnaim said the Municipality originally planned the school for a lot in al-Suwaneh neighborhood, near Augusta Victoria Hospital. However, Ghnaim said, a settler group supported by American millionaire Irving Moskowitz convinced the Municipality to build a yeshiva in al-Suwaneh, promising to design an elementary school for Palestinians elsewhere in al-Tur as compensation. Ghnaim said the Municipality chose the al-Hadra's land. Ghnaim lamented that "we need a new school, but the Municipality must find another place."

¶3. (C) Jerusalem lawyer Danny Seidemann told PolOff January 13 that this action may be a response to a suit he brought against the Jerusalem Municipality to build a new school in al-Tur. He said it will be difficult to challenge because there is an extreme shortage of classrooms in East Jerusalem. Gila Orkin, Director of International Relations for the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), told PolOff the Jerusalem Municipality is 1,500 classrooms short for Palestinians in East Jerusalem.

Municipality Preparing for  
Additional Confiscations in 2009

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¶4. (C) Deputy Political Advisor to the Jerusalem Mayor Elad Halevy told PolOff January 14 that the confiscation of the al-Hadra land is not a political issue and that the Municipality is trying to provide schools to East Jerusalemites. He said that confiscation would require several months of legal proceedings before becoming official. He said that the Municipality approved a budget of NIS

10,805,000 (approximately USD 2,843,000) for the purpose of confiscating land in East Jerusalem in 2009 to build additional schools.

Abu Dis: 506 dumums confiscated for security barrier

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15. (C) Peace Now activist Simcha Levintal told PolOff January 13 that the IDF issued an order January 12 to confiscate 506 dunums of public land in Abu Dis, adjacent to East Jerusalem, to continue building the security barrier and incorporate the Qedar settlement into the Ma'ale Adumim bloc.

Levintal said completion of the security barrier according to this plan will enclose all the land between Qedar and Ma'ale Adumim, which are separated by 1.5 km at the shortest point, and 6 km by road.

16. (C) Levintal said Qedar, which has about 100 families and an approved plan for several hundred new housing units, has asked to be transferred from the Binyamin Regional Council to the Ma'ale Adumim Municipality to underscore its position within the Maale Adumim bloc. Levintal said Peace Now will petition the Supreme Court to freeze the barrier plan, and will consider additional legal action. He also noted that the Supreme Court asked the Israeli MOD ten months ago to "reconsider" plans for the barrier route east of Abu Dis; this new barrier route is the MOD's response.

17. (C) Abu Dis Mayor Ibrahim Jaffal told PolOff January 14 that PA attorneys intend to fight the confiscation in Israeli courts. He said the announcement of this confiscation is disheartening for Palestinians, because it indicates that any

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progress toward peace has been halted.

Nahalin: new security road for settlers

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18. (C) The IDF issued an order January 13 confiscating 18 dunams of land in the village of Nahalin, west of Bethlehem, to construct a security road between the Gavaot and Betar Illit settlements. PA sources said the road would separate 4,400 dunams (1,100 acres) from the owners in Nahalin. Gush Etzion Regional Chairman Shaul Goldstein said on January 14 that he was very pleased the road had been approved, that he had requested the road for "a long time," and that the road will be important for settler security in his area.

WALLES